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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2070
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6153
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4375
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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - APRIL 28

Leading Stories

1. Chile's Health Ministry has implemented nationwide measures, equivalent to the World Health Organization's (WHO) level 4 alert, to identify and contain any outbreak of swine flu in the country. Thus far, suspicious cases have all tested negative. Dailies also reported extensively on the impact of the outbreak on stock markets and tourism worldwide.

U.S.-Related News

2. The "Nomad" is a robot equipped with technology used by NASA on its rovers in Mars. NASA tested the robot in Chile's northern desert some years ago and has agreed to put the vehicle on exhibit for five years at the Antofagasta Desert Museum as part of the astronomy exhibit, which will open this year. The museum is located on the Huanchaca Ruins (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000, 4/28).

Swine Flu

3. The Ministry of Health has implemented preventive measures for the early detection of a possible outbreak of swine flu in Chile. These include briefing arriving airplane passengers on the symptoms, screening travelers at airports and major border crossings for temperatures, and referring suspicious cases to two specific hospitals for testing. The preventive measures also include distributing anti-viral medication to hospitals; coordinating action plans with private clinics; and distributing brochures with information on how to prevent contamination. The authorities recommended avoiding travel to locations with outbreaks, such as Mexico, the United States, Canada, Spain, and the U.K.

4. Fourteen people who recently traveled to either Mexico or the United States have been classified as suspicious and are being tested. So far none have tested positive for swine fever.

5. The swine flu outbreak is causing people to cancel or change their airplane tickets to Mexico and other locations with outbreaks, significantly affecting tourism agencies. The sale of anti-viral medication, such as Tamiflu, has ballooned. Local health authorities are concerned that the increase in sales could affect the stocks of medication needed for an eventual outbreak, and are urging the public to refrain from buying anti-viral medication of any kind (All dailies, 4/28).

Venezuela

¶6. Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Alberto Van Klaveren confirmed that President Hugo Chavez will visit Chile May 17-18, in response to an invitation from President Bachelet. Van Klaveren said that two topics on the agenda are strengthening the energy agreement between Chile's national oil company ENAP and its Venezuelan counterpart PDVSA (signed in 2007), and the election of an Executive Secretary in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) (All dailies, 4/28).

Cuba

¶7. Just a few weeks after President Obama lifted the restrictions for Cuban-Americans to travel and send remittances to Cuba, Department of State spokesperson Robert Wood announced that USG and Cuban officials are meeting informally, yet regularly, in Washington. The first meeting was on April 13, and the second yesterday, between A/S Thomas Shannon and the Chief of Cuban Interest Section in Washington (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, circ. 4,200, 4/28).

IPR

¶8. The process to patent an invention -- an industrial design or a commercial brand -- is expensive and difficult in Chile, said Catholic University IPR expert, Rosario Retamal. To begin with, the patent request costs around US\$5,000 and there is no assurance that it will be issued. The period to receive a patent can take up to five years. Requests are often poorly worded, therefore rejected, and there is ignorance about the procedure. Finally, Chile has a "culture of theft" of ideas, said Retamal. The sum of these factors explains why Chile only has 50 patent requests per year versus 100,000 in the United States (Estrategia, business and financial, circ. 30,000, 4/28).

Presidential Candidate Pinera

¶9. Opposition candidate Sebastian Pinera finished the voluntary transfer of his assets to a blind trust. But his opponents are criticizing him for retaining 25% ownership of commercial airline Lan, 20% of the private clinic Las Condes, and full ownership of television station Chilevision. The candidate said he has promised to put the airline and the clinic in the blind trust if he is elected President in December. However, he will not do this with the TV station. The daily stated that, "in sum, Pinera has transferred less than half of his US\$1.2 billion assets to the blind trust." (La Nacion, 4/28).

URBAN